

together by caffeinescripts

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, basically just missing scenes between the time jumps, just my thoughts from season 1 leading into season 3, kinda a character study on nancy??? almost?? not really, season 3 fic

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington even though he's in it for like a second

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, tiniest joyce / hopper mention in the world

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-05-17

Updated: 2018-05-17

Packaged: 2022-04-22 04:49:27

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,551

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

What even is love? She thinks sourly.

'Cause this certainly isn't it. The push she feels when her boyfriend shoots her those expectant eyes, begging her to say the words back. Not when she lugs herself to his basketball games, not even finding it in herself to cheer when they score. Not when they have study dates at his house alone and she feels more fear and discomfort than anywhere else in the entire world it seems.

(An awful voice betrays her in the back of her mind. *It doesn't feel like this at Jonathan's.*)

together

Author's Note:

when you feel horrible about your writing lately you can do two things: complain or keep writing. I did both.

What even is love? She thinks sourly.

'Cause this certainly isn't it. It's not the push she feels when her boyfriend shoots her those expectant eyes, begging her to say the words back. Not when she lugs herself to his basketball games, not even finding it in herself to cheer when they score. Not when they have study dates at his house alone and she feels more fear and discomfort than anywhere else in the entire world it seems.

(An awful voice betrays her in the back of her mind. *It doesn't feel like this at Jonathan's.*)

It's all so disgustingly normal. What she'd been craving for a year. But it gives her no relief or solace. In fact, it puts her more on edge. Everything seems fine when it's not and she knows it. It feels like the world is still upside down. That she's trying to shove puzzle pieces that don't fit together because that's what she's supposed to do.

She's not really surprised when it all blows up on her.

It's a sticky and muddled night that she can't even remember when she sunrises. But Steve doesn't pick her up that morning and her stomach churns.

She's not really surprised when she takes more interest in finally seeking justice than amending, hell even mourning, her relationship. If she's being honest, the relationship she's been mourning for a while now. The year mark snuck up on her and she realizes she'd been wasting days like picking petals off a flower.

She should be *more* surprised when their lives turn to hell again. When she finally figures things out, the first morning she wakes up

without a weight on her chest (her weight on someone else's chest entirely, actually), it starts all again.

His brother's dying and the world is ending, it seems. She swears if, by some luck, they all get out of this unscratched for a *second* time she's never going to waste another second trying to force things to be this terrible contrived sense of normal she wanted before.

They all survive. It's miraculous but leaves more paranoia instead of peace in its wake. Mike sleeps with his light on, she moves her gun from under the bed to her nightstand.

Jonathan, too, wakes up with nightmares.

He doesn't scream, not like she does. He thrashes in a way that's familiar to her own, but he squirms and almost makes a sound that she can't make out because she's only half awake. But she knows what's going on instantly as she shakes him, calling his name, and he wakes with a start.

"Jonathan." She breathes, looking up at him. Sweat gathers on his forehead as he takes deep breaths. "Are you okay?"

He looks to her. "Nancy?"

"I'm here. I'm right here." She sits up straighter, placing her hands on either side of his face in an effort to calm him down and get him to look at her.

Instead, he pulls her to him. He wraps his arms around her waist and back. He's shaking in a way that's reminiscent of when they excersized his baby brother and Nancy can't think of anything to do to calm him except run her fingers through his hair and press a kiss to where her lips landed on his neck.

She's not sure how long they stay like that but she makes no effort to move until he does, at least until the shaking stops. It's silent besides

his uneven breaths and Nancy still mumbling she's here. The concern must be evident on her face when his death grip loosens.

"Jonathan?" She tries again.

"It...It just felt so real." He responds, pulling back a little. His arms still stay around her.

She wants to tell him she knows, *God* she knows, but she pulls back enough to see his face and brush his hair out of his eyes. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Nancy can hardly see him in this light, only the moon peeking through the window facing her, but she can tell he's not meeting her eyes. He's focused on something far away, and his voice is very quiet when he replies. "It first got Will, then my mom..." He swallows, his eyes cast downwards now. "And then you."

Something inside her breaks, Jonathan confirming he feels the same flash of terror she does at the thought of losing him. "It didn't." She tells him firmly. "It didn't get any of us. We're all right here."

Jonathan finally meets her gaze, but he still looks scared. Like he could wake up any minute and *this* could be the dream.

"I know, but-" He pauses, trying to formulate what he wants to say. "What if it comes back?"

Nancy had never been the comfort-er before. Steve never had nightmares, and most of the time it was Jonathan holding her and knowing exactly what to say. But she knows exactly what Jonathan wants to hear because it's the same thing she does in times like this. "If it does...we'll be ready."

He finds relief in that, she knows it based on how he nods and his shoulders un-tense. None of that bullshit, that it won't come back. They can't plan for it not coming back. But they can be ready in case it does. There's something extremely comforting in knowing Jonathan operates on the same wavelength as she does.

He kisses her, hard. Proof this is real and she's there and they love each other. When he releases her and they decide to give sleep

another shot, he pulls her tighter against him than usual. She makes an effort to match his breathing but can't fall asleep until she's sure he already has. When her weary eyes finally give out she thinks she can just see the beginnings of the sunrise behind him. But that doesn't matter because he's sleeping soundly under her.

She's at her locker, swapping books and waiting for him. Maybe this is what love is, the impatient part of her that's annoyed Jonathan's fifth period always gets out late. She hasn't seen him since this morning and it's not her fault she misses him.

He doesn't surprise-scare her the way Steve used to. He just walks up to her, allowing her to steal a kiss in the middle of the hallway despite his shyness. She finds it adorable when he turns beet red and she almost wants to keep him here to see him get to that point, but she's merciful so she doesn't. It's not like a simple kiss embarrasses him, but she imagines other things that could and dutifully tries to hide the smile she gets thinking about them.

"What?" He, naturally, calls her out on it.

"Nothing." Nancy shrugs, finishing up with her locker. She can read Jonathan's look in a heartbeat. His eyebrows are raised and saying *No bullshit, remember?* "I was just thinking about how much I like you, that's all."

She grins when he does go red this time, ducking his head but Nancy doesn't allow it as she pulls her hand into his. She wants to kiss him again, but she remembers being merciful. "*And,*" She tacks on instead, lowering her voice. "How much I want to go make out in your car right now."

He swallows hard. "We better get going then."

Mischief laced her voice but Jonathan's pulling them out the doors

quicker than their casual walking to lunch pace and it evokes a laugh from her.

"I like you too." He says against her lips, in a deserted parking lot ten minutes away from Hawkins High. "So much."

Nancy uses the opportunity to kiss down his jaw. "I know."

She thinks he wants to say those three pesky words just as badly as she does right now, but they find their tongues busy again soon enough.

They don't do anything fun for spring break, but they never do. She puts up with hearing about Carol's trip to Florida in the locker room and Ally is going to Minneapolis. She and Jonathan are probably going to spend the week tangled together in any way, and Mike and the gang are going to play in the sprinklers out in the front yard.

"A week of normalcy." She announces, stealing a sip of Jonathan's drink after she says it.

"Sounds nice." Steve breathes, almost jealous, across from them. Two sets of eyebrows are raised at him. "I have to visit UI." He deadpans.

"That's not so bad." Nancy rationalizes. "Day trip?"

He dismisses her with the shake of his head. "Couple days. Mom wants to make sure I get the full experience before I turn down the full ride."

Nancy can't relate to not wanting to go to college, especially for free on a basketball scholarship when his family is far from struggling. But she can relate to not wanting to do what everyone else wants from you, so she's sympathetic.

"Maybe it'll be awful." Jonathan pipes up. "Then you'll hate it so much you'll have a reason not to go."

That earns a laugh from Steve. "I wish man." He pushes his cafeteria food around on the tray, not interested in finishing his lunch.

Jonathan looks to Nancy, and she looks back to him before trying to figure out how to answer. Nancy's shoulders rise, signaling she's out of advice.

"Mrs. Henderson is going out of town for the week," Jonathan speaks up again, both of them giving him confused looks. "Tell your parents you have to babysit instead."

Steve genuinely smiles for the first time since they sat down, and as he gets up he claps Jonathan on the shoulder. "That's a good one Byers. Shit, I gotta convince Mr. Baker to let me retake a geometry test if I want to graduate in May, I'll see you guys."

They say their goodbyes as Steve waves and when he walks out the cafeteria doors, Nancy fully turns to her boyfriend.

"We should go on a trip sometime."

"Yeah?" Jonathan laughs, grabbing her hand now. Their 'out of respect for Steve limit the PDA' rule only bothers them when they're specifically not allowed to touch.

"Yeah. Lots of great bands come to Chicago." She shrugs, a smile tugging on the corner of her lips. "Besides, it wouldn't be the first time we've gone out of town together."

Jonathan returns her shy grin also, in any effort to bring her closer he angles his body fully towards her. "Yeah, yeah you're right. Maybe this time we wouldn't have to get a double room."

Nancy laughs, bringing the back of her hand against his shoulder without any weight behind it. "We needed a double at the time!" They, honestly, didn't. "And you weren't exactly opposing me." He wasn't.

Jonathan shrugs, moving to steal a grape from her lunch. "Fair enough. But it's not like I could confess my feelings for you in a motel lobby."

"Because a weird journalists basement is much more romantic."

He turns red again, but then he's kissing her within the next moment so she doesn't really pay attention to anything besides that. It only lasts a minute and he's smiling through it, but Nancy couldn't care less. She just laughs when he pulls away, hand still interlocked with hers.

"Yeah. So, who would you want to see in Chicago?"

The rest of the school year flies by, and they make good on their promise to visit Chicago (several times, actually. From bands Jonathan wants to see to trips Nancy wants to go on, by summer they're no strangers to the city). It's hot and their plans for the day revolve around if he works or if the kids or Steve want to do something.

Their days blur by, captured like polaroids that Jonathan snaps whenever he can now. Nancy's not only never been so proud of a Christmas gift, but time doesn't feel wasted anymore.

It's hot and they go to the movies. They swim at the lake and spray each other (and their little brothers and various friends) with the hose. They eat ice cream for dinner and fall asleep curled up together in the back of his car. Nancy gets a haircut and Jonathan grows his out a bit and it's so nice that Nancy thinks she understands what an endless summer afternoon feels like. What genuine happiness feels like.

Also, love. That's not as abstract anymore.

The look in his eyes when he's driving them home from a concert but can't take his eyes off of her. Or when he's taking photos of her and she can't stop laughing to get the right shot. She wishes they could always be so carefree.

"Do you think it'll still come back?" Jonathan reads her thoughts one

night. She's in an old t-shirt of his and shorts but it's pitch black. The kids are all asleep scattered around them in sleeping bags, even though the movie is still playing.

Nancy takes a moment to look at him, "We're supposed to be supervising." She says instead.

She felt proud when Joyce had asked them to look after the six preteens since she was spending the night at Hoppers, disguised under the umbrella term of just "going out". Until she remembered the same responsibility has been bestowed on Steve Harrington for months now. Still, her big sister urge to protect them is always there.

"We are. They're asleep."

"And good older siblings would let them sleep."

Jonathan shrugs underneath her. "Good older siblings would turn off the TV."

Nancy considers this, completely comfortable in his embrace on the couch even if it's a bit tight. "I'm not getting up."

"Guess we're not good siblings then." He laughs slightly and she does too. "But, seriously." He pauses, looking at all of them before continuing his thought. "Do you think it's ever coming back?"

Nancy bites her lip, honesty is always the best with Jonathan. "Yeah." She nods.

"Me too," Jonathan mumbles, somehow pulling her even closer to him with the arm around her waist. "Think we're ready?"

"Fourth of July's next week." Nancy lets out a humorless laugh, "We're all stocked up on fireworks."

"Fire doesn't kill it."

"It distracts it. Hurts it." Nancy shrugs. "El's pretty strong now, I've still got my gun."

"The nail bat is around this town somewhere." Jonathan murmurs.

There's a pause after Nancy nods against him. "We can take it. We've done it before, we'll do it again if we have to."

Jonathan lifts his head to look at her a bit. "Together."

"Together." Nancy affirms, lifting herself to kiss him. It's a little awkward considering their position, but it feels like a promise.

He's sure to look her in the eyes, "I love you."

"I love you too, Jonathan." She says it now. She means it.

She's pulled in for another quick kiss before she dutifully pulls away, "We should get some sleep."

Jonathan, reluctantly, nods as he drops his head back down on the pillow. Nancy resettles herself against his chest. "Night Nance."

"Night Jonathan." She whispers, trying to ignore that Jonathan has the same gut instincts that she does. That she can't shake the feeling everything is going to come back very, very soon.